

# First record of Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus* for São Tomé and Príncipe

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**Première observation du Vanneau éperonné *Vanellus spinosus* à São Tomé et Príncipe.** Le 21 mars 2012, un Vanneau éperonné *Vanellus spinosus* a été photographié au Bom Bom Island Resort, Príncipe. L'oiseau est resté sur le site jusqu'au 30 mars. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour São Tomé et Príncipe et pour les îles du Golfe de Guinée. De plus, il s'agit peut-être de la première preuve que cette espèce peut traverser une étendue de mer d'au moins 210 km.

On 21 March 2012, MP observed a large plover on the beach of Bom Bom Island Resort (01°41'N 07°24'E), at the northernmost tip of the island of Príncipe. MP immediately realised that it was very different from the bird species usually seen on the island (which do not include plovers), and obtained several photographs (Figs. 1–2). The bird remained on the resort grounds until 30 March, before disappearing. It was subsequently identified from the photographs by SV as an adult Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus* based on its distinctive plumage. The crown and nape were jet black, sharply contrasting with the white lower face and neck-sides. The upperparts were buff-brown. A coarse black stripe ran from the throat to the black breast and flanks. In flight, the black primaries and secondaries were separated from

the buff-brown upperwing-coverts by a broad white bar, and contrasted with the bright white underwing; the rump was white, the tail feathers black. Bill and legs were black.

This appears to be the first record of Spur-winged Lapwing for São Tomé and Príncipe: the species is not mentioned by Jones & Tye (2006), nor in the latest country checklist by Dowsett *et al.* (2013). It is also unknown from the other Gulf of Guinea islands (Perez del Val 1996, Perez del Val *et al.* 1997). In West Africa, Spur-winged Lapwing is a common to locally uncommon resident, ranging from southern Mauritania to Sierra Leone east to Chad and northern Central African Republic (Borrow & Demey 2001). A vagrant was photographed in 1977 at Gamba (02°47'S 10°02'E), south-west Gabon (Sergeant 1993; P. Christy pers. comm.). The island of



**Figures 1–2.** Spur-winged Lapwing / Vanneau éperonné *Vanellus spinosus*, Bom Bom Island Resort, Príncipe, 21 March 2012 (Madalena Patacho)

Príncipe lies c.450 km south of the species' known range and 220 km west of Gabon.

In Africa, Spur-winged Lapwing is generally sedentary although it is known to perform intra-continental movements in response to rains and flooding of its habitat (Urban *et al.* 1986, Delany *et al.* 2009). North of the Mediterranean, birds are migratory and regular passage through Cyprus suggests a direct route from the east Mediterranean and a potential sea crossing of 70–220 km, although confirmation is lacking (Cramp & Simmons 1983). It is therefore noteworthy that our bird represents possibly the first evidence that Spur-winged Plovers can cross a stretch of at least 210 km of sea (i.e. the minimum distance from Bioko Island).

In East Africa the species is reportedly expanding its range southwards into southern Tanzania (Baker 1996), Malawi and Zambia (Delany *et al.* 2009), but there is no published evidence as yet that anything similar is occurring in western Africa, thus the bird we describe here, like that recorded in Gabon, must be regarded as a vagrant.

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